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The world of the CIA

by Wayland Young

THE CRAFT OF INTELLIGENCE, by Allen Dulles (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 30s).

Allen Dulles

CONSIDERING how strongly he feels that the public already knows too much about his subject matter, the former head of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has written a most instructive book. He had this job throughout the "era" (the late fifties) which is already known by the name of his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

The first example of military intelligence he gives is when the Greeks consulted the Oracle about the enemy's intentions, and indeed there is sometimes a certain owlishness about his writing which would be easy to ridicule. The beginning of the book is marred by tracts of hasty history about Hannibal and Mithridates and Walsingham; even the Second World War is shadowy, and Mr Dulles only gets into his stride when he comes to his very own war, the Cold one.

Many well known stories are retold, and some useful lesser-known ones, like that of the young Icelandic Communist called Gunnarsson who was approached by the Soviet Intelligence Service to become a spy, refused, told the Icelandic authorities about it, and went right on being a Communist. Mr Dulles draws the right moral; communism is now polylithic.

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THOSE concerned with the arms race will naturally look for what Mr Dulles has to say about the apparent intelligence failures which led to the American belief in first a bomber and then a missile gap in Russia's favour. They will find what appears to be moderate candour. There is no attempt to conceal that a mistake was made in projecting how many of each the Russians would build, but the only explanation offered is that the Russians once flew the same squadron of bombers round and round at a ceremonial fly past. Nor is there anything about the consequent American over-ordering of bombers or missiles or of the effect of that on the shape of the world.

And yet the false strategic "gaps" have been perhaps the second most important factor in shaping the world as it now is; (the first being the real and increasing economic gap between rich and poor nations). All intelligence services are naturally inclined to go for the determinate and the measurable. The American service is especially so inclined since it shares to the full the natural belief of a society which leads the world in ing machinery that duly processed sensory data are the best data. And these data said the Russians *could* build a certain number of bombers and rockets. The subsequent question, which comes naturally to the mind of a rural, feudal-subsistence European—will they?—though it was no doubt asked, did not seem so important. In the CIA, one estimate of capability is felt to be worth ten estimates of intention, because you cannot put a quantity on intention. Therefore, it is not so real. Therefore you should not base your actions on it. And if your Government can afford to match the enemy's capabilities, what does his intention matter anyway?

These values are also reflected in the recruiting passage in the book. (The CIA sends even its very senior members round universities giving recruiting lectures to students of American birth.) The description of the ideal intelligence officer lays much stress on his reliability, his discretion, his professional adaptability, and his devotion to freedom, but not much on his imagination.

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IT IS, anyway, harder for the Americans to guess their adversary's intentions, because America is ahead in the arms race. If, like the USSR, you are tagging along in second place, you can judge the leader's intentions from his actions. You can also use your knowledge to *throw* the leader, in the sense actors use the word. Sputnik threw the bombers, electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) and the hectomegaton warhead may be partly throwing Minuteman at this moment; Cuba and the "global rocket" threw BMEWS, the Soviet submarine-borne ballistic missiles have thrown counterforce. And yet the United States has never been overtaken by the Soviet Union; her arsenals and strategies have simply been partially invalidated from time to time by a knight's move from the weaker side. The worst that can be said of the CIA is that they do not seem to have been capable of putting themselves in the shoes of an adversary compelled by weakness to move deviously; they have seen only [illegible]

incomparably strong, very highly militarised, and able, because ahead, to make unconditioned choices among strategic force structures and strategic doctrines.

The English reader, after a year of security scandals, can take courage from Mr Dulles's comparison between the British and American law of security. He has a patent envy of the British Official Secrets Act and D Notice system. When somebody in the American Administration leaks a secret to the press (or to anyone else) the official culprit can be punished, but nothing on heaven or earth can be done about his contact, who may still put it in "Aviation Week" or "Missiles and Rockets," or indeed the "New York Times." And there is no provision in American law for prosecuting anyone for blowing secrets without having the secrets right out in court. "... British legislation is based on the theory of privilege, that all official information belongs to the Crown and that those who receive it officially may not lawfully divulge it without the authority of the Crown. This theory ... seems a sound one. ... The knowledge that our Government is only likely to prosecute in the most heinous cases of espionage" (because it means telling the *whole* story in open court) "gives certain people the assurance that they can commit minor infringements ... with impunity. The knowledge has not been lost on the Soviets."

In this passage you can see American history come full circle. They fought their revolution for the right to say no longer *Rex v. Smith* but *The People v. Smith*, and now Mr Dulles feels this upward-pointing arrow of jurisdiction puts them at a disadvantage compared with States which still have a downward-pointing one in some fields. Perhaps perfect democracy in law is not compatible with nationhood at all; if you were to pursue it with perfect consistency, your nationhood would leak away through bad security. In the United States this incompatibility is strongly, if inarticulately, felt, and may contribute to the ardour with which both nation and democracy are